Rs.313.46 lakhs were sanctioned and Rs.313.06 lakhs released to the state of Assam, for development and promotion of tourism.

Development of tourism in UP and Maharashtra

†1439. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) the names of the place selected by Government for development of tourism in Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra during the current year, and

(b) the plan formulated by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) and (b) Development of tourist places is primarily undertaken by State Governments/UT Administrations. However, the Ministry of Tourism also extends financial assistance for development of tourist places of national and international importance identified in consultation with them. The process of identification of tourist places of Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra to be taken up for development during the current financial year have not been completed so far.

Tourists visiting Agra

1440. SHRI SHAHID SIDDI QUI: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) what is the number of tourists who visited India during the last three years and how many out of them visited Agra to see Taj Mahal;

(b) what is the average time spent by them; and

(c) whether there is a proposal or plan to see that the tourists spend more money and time in Agra?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) The information regarding the number of foreign tourists who visited India and subsequently visited Taj Mahal during the last three years is as follows:

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Year	Number of foreign tourists arrival to India	Number of foreign tourists who visited Taj Mahal
2001	2537282	249267
2002	2384364	171035
2003	2750290*	250716

*Estimated

(b) On an average time spent by a tourist on the Centrally protected ticketed monuments including Taj Mahal is about one to two hours.

(c) Taj Mahal is a world heritage monument and it has always been the endeavour of Governments that more and more tourists visit this wonder of the world. Coinciding with completion of 350 years of its glorious existence, the Government of Uttar Pradesh has decided to celebrate the year 2004-05 as the International Year of the Taj commencing from World Tourist Day *i.e.,* 27th September 2004 to present Taj Mahal and surrounding sites as most preferred destination of the year. It is hoped that with increase in tourist flow, expenditure by tourists will also go up.

Ecotourism

1441. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are thinking of unlocking forests for controlled tourism for the. first time;

(b) if so, whether Government have finalised the set of comprehensive guidelines on ecotourism;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) whether Government propose to involve private players in this project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) to (c) Tourists are already allowed to visit Wild-Life Sanctuaries and National Parks in the country in a regulated manner. Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has formulated Eco Tourism Policy and Guidelines, which have been circulated to all the State Governments/Union Territories and tourism trade. The